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Births, Australia methodology

Reference period 2021

Released 25/10/2022

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Birth registrations

This release contains statistics for births and fertility. Detailed information can be obtained from data cubes (in Microsoft Excel format) and Data Explorer datasets available electronically from [Data downloads](#)

(<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/births-australia/latest-release#data-download>).

Populations used in this release

Estimated resident populations (ERPs) are used as denominators to calculate fertility rates.

ERPs used in this release that are based on the results of the 2021 Census are as follows:

- State, Territory and Australia level ERP for 2021 (preliminary status), released in [National, state and territory population, December Quarter, 2021](#)

(<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/national-state-and-territory-population/dec-2021>) issued on 28 June 2022

- Sub-state ERP (ASGS Main structure 2021) for 2021 (preliminary status), released in [Regional population by age and sex, 2021](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/latest-release) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population-age-and-sex/latest-release>) issued on 30 August 2022
- Sub-State ERP (Remoteness Area 2016) for 2021 (preliminary status), released in [Regional population](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/2021#) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/regional-population/2021#>) issued on 26 July 2022
- Local Government Area (LGA) ERP for 2011-2021 are based on the 2021 edition of the [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\): Edition 3 - Non ABS Structures](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/non-abs-structures) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/standards/australian-statistical-geography-standard-asgs-edition-3/jul2021-jun2026/non-abs-structures>) issued on 20 July 2021.

ERPs used in this release that are based on the results of the 2016 Census are as follows:

- Country of Birth ERP for 2021 (preliminary status), released in [Australia's Population by Country of Birth](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/australias-population-country-birth/2021) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/population/australias-population-country-birth/2021>), issued on 26 April 2022
- Population estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, released in [Estimates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0.55.001>) issued on 31 August 2018
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australian ERP for 2011-2021 as published in [Estimates and Projections, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0) (<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3238.0>) updated on 11 July 2019.

Scope and coverage

Scope of birth registration statistics

The ABS Birth Registrations collection includes all births that occurred and were registered in Australia, including births to mothers whose place of usual residence was overseas.

The scope of the statistics includes:

- all births that were live born and were not previously registered
- births that occurred within Australian Territorial waters
- births to temporary visitors to Australia
- births that occurred in Australian Antarctic Territories and other external territories
- births that occurred on Norfolk Island from 1 July 2016 are included. This is due to the introduction of the Norfolk Island Legislation Amendment Act 2015. Norfolk Island births are included in statistics for 'Other Territories' as well as totals for all of Australia. Births occurring on Norfolk Island prior to 1 July 2016 were not in scope for birth statistics

- births that occurred in transit (i.e. on ships or planes) if registered in the Australian state or territory of 'next port of call'
- births to Australian nationals employed overseas at Australian legations and consular offices (i.e. children born overseas to Australian diplomats or their families)
- births that occurred in earlier years that have not been previously registered (late registrations).

The scope of the statistics excludes:

- stillbirths/fetal deaths (these are accounted for in perinatal death statistics published in [Causes of Death, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release), and previously, [Perinatal Deaths, Australia \(https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3304.0\)](https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3304.0))
- adoptions, changes to a record of sex on the birth register, legitimations and corrections
- births to foreign diplomatic staff in Australia.

Prior to 2007, the scope for the reference year of the Birth Registrations collection included births registered:

- in the reference year and received by the ABS in the reference year
- in the reference year and received by the ABS in the first quarter of the subsequent year
- during the two years prior to the reference year but not received by the ABS until the reference year.

From 2007 onwards, the scope for each reference year of the Birth Registrations collection includes births registered in the:

- reference year and received by the ABS in the reference year
- reference year and received by the ABS in the first quarter of the subsequent year
- years prior to the reference year but not received by the ABS until the reference year or the first quarter of the subsequent year, provided that these records have not been included in any statistics from earlier periods.

Birth records received by the ABS during the March quarter of 2022, which were registered in 2021, were assigned to the 2021 reference year. Any registrations relating to 2021 which were received by the ABS from April 2022 were assigned to the 2022 reference year and will be reported in the next iteration of this publication.

Coverage of birth statistics

Ideally, for compiling annual time series, the number of births should be recorded as all those occurring within a given reference period such as a calendar year. Due to lags in registration of births and the provision of that information to the ABS from state and

territory Registries of Births, Deaths and Marriages (RBDM), data in this release are presented on a year of registration basis, unless otherwise stated.

There are **three** dates attributable to each birth registration:

- the date of occurrence (of the birth)
- the date of registration or inclusion on the state/territory register
- the month and year in which the registered birth is provided to the ABS.

Data in this release are presented according to date of registration, unless otherwise stated.

The registration date differs between states and territories, and should be taken into account when analysing birth statistics for births registered in:

- New South Wales, Western Australia and the Australian Capital Territory, the birth registration date is the date at which the record is entered into the registration processing system.
- Victoria, the birth registration date is the date at which the record is completed in system.
- Queensland, the registration date is the date at which all mandatory data items required for a registration to be considered complete have been entered into the system at which point the registration number and registration date are automatically assigned.
- South Australia, the birth registration date is assigned on the date on which the birth notification and the birth registration are verified to match by the Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages (RBDM). However, the birth record is not provided to the ABS until the record is assessed to be complete.
- Tasmania, an 'insertion date' is allocated when any information relating to the birth is first entered into the registration system. This is the date that is provided to the ABS.
- the Northern Territory, the registration date is the date at which the record is verified by the Registry, shortly after the record is entered in to the registration system. For birth records not received by the Registry within 60 days of the birth, the Registry will register the child's given name as 'not stated' and the surname as that of the mother.

Data sources

Registration of births is the responsibility of state and territory RBDM and is based on data provided on an information form completed by the parent(s) of the child. This information is provided to the ABS by individual Registrars for coding and compilation into aggregate statistics in this release. Core data items are collected in all states and territories and therefore statistics at the national level are available for key characteristics. Some states collect additional information.

Hospitals and birth clinics notify state and territory registries of recent births on a regular basis. For births where a notification has been received by a registry, but has not been registered within the prescribed time period, parents are contacted by reminder letters and/or phone calls.

Classifications

Nuptiality

Nuptiality relates to the registered marital status of the parent(s) of the child at the time of birth. Confinements and births are classified as:

- Nuptial where the father registered was married to the mother at the time of the child's birth, or where the husband died during the mother's pregnancy (confinements and births to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers considered to be tribally married to the father of the child are classified as nuptial)
- Ex-nuptial where the parents were not in a registered marriage at the time of the child's birth, irrespective of whether the parents were living together at the time of the birth
- Ex-nuptial births and confinements are further classified as paternity acknowledged (where the father signed the birth registration form) or paternity not acknowledged (where the father did not sign the birth registration form).

Geography

This issue of Births includes data cubes containing birth and fertility statistics on the Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) and the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC). For further information refer to:

- [Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\): Edition 3 \(Australian Statistical Geography Standard \(ASGS\) Edition 3\)](#)
- [Standard Australian Classification of Countries \(SACC\), 2016](#)
(<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/1269.0>)

State and Territory data

Legislation - Other Territories

As a result of an amendment made in 1992 to section 17(a) of the Acts Interpretation Act 1901-1973 (Commonwealth), the Indian Ocean territories of Christmas Island and Cocos (Keeling) Islands have been included as part of geographic Australia since 1993, hence another category of the state and territory classification has been created. This category is known as 'Other Territories' and includes Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, and

Jervis Bay Territory. From 1 July 2016, Other Territories also include Norfolk Island following the introduction of the Norfolk Island Legislation Amendment Act 2015.

Prior to 1993, births to mothers usually resident in Christmas Island or Cocos (Keeling) Islands were included with Offshore areas and Migratory in Western Australia, while births to mothers usually resident in Jervis Bay Territory were included with the Australian Capital Territory. In 2021, there were 33 births to mothers usually resident in Christmas Island, the Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Jervis Bay Territory and Norfolk Island.

State and Territory statistics

Birth statistics for states and territories have been compiled and presented according to the state or territory of usual residence of the mother regardless of where in Australia the birth occurred and was registered, except where otherwise stated.

In the following table, data are presented on both a state or territory of registration and state or territory of usual residence basis. Births which took place outside Australia are excluded from the statistics. Births to mothers who were usual residents of Australia's Other Territories (Christmas Island, Cocos (Keeling) Islands, Jervis Bay Territory and Norfolk Island) cannot be registered in Other Territories but are registered in other Australian states and territories.

Births registered in 2021, state or territory of usual residence of mother by state or territory of registration

Usual residence(a)	Registration(a)								
	NSW	Vic.	Qld	SA	WA	Tas.	NT	ACT	Aust.
NSW	98,663	1,106	498	42	17	4	4	1,002	101,332
Vic.	83	75,177	17	43	30	10	0	1	75,363
Qld	342	48	63,685	7	14	9	2	3	64,111
SA	14	25	9	19,660	13	3	33	0	19,757
WA	20	22	19	8	33,956	2	12	0	34,039
Tas.	11	19	3	0	1	5,998	0	0	6,034
NT	27	10	25	22	12	2	3,685	4	3,784
ACT	129	7	3	1	1	3	0	5,402	5,543
OT	11	0	1	0	20	0	0	0	33
Aust.	99,300	76,414	64,261	19,783	34,065	6,027	3,736	6,410	309,996

a. Small data cells have been randomised to preserve confidentiality. As a result, sums of components may not add exactly to totals. Cells with a value of zero have not been affected by this randomisation.

Mothers usually resident overseas

In 2021, there were 212 births registered in Australia to women who usually lived overseas. These have been coded to 'Special purpose codes' and appear in outputs as usual residents of the state or territory total in which the birth was registered.